

THE BASICS OF ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER



City Officials Guide to an
Effective Meeting

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Basics of Robert's Rules

General Order of Meetings

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Officers, Boards and Standing Committee Reports
4. Unfinished (Old) Business
5. New Business
6. Adjournment

Procedure to Make a Motion

1. Member raises hand and waits for recognition from the presiding officer.
2. The member states the motion. e.g. "I move that we paint city hall."
3. Another member must second the motion to continue.
4. The presiding officer states the motion. (This puts the motion on the floor.)
5. Presiding officer calls for discussion on this motion.
The member who introduced the motion has the right to speak first. Members wishing to discuss the motion raise their hands and wait for recognition from the presiding officer before speaking, enabling everyone to share their opinions.
6. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the motion.
7. Presiding officer states results of vote and resulting action.

Procedure to Amend a Motion

During discussion, it may become apparent that an amendment (modification) to the original motion is necessary. Anyone may request to amend the original motion, but the proposed amendment must be related to the subject of the main motion.

1. Member raises hand and is recognized from the presiding officer.
2. Member states the amendment. e.g. I move that we paint city hall with funding received from grants."
3. Amendment must be seconded.
4. Presiding officer states the amendment.
4. Presiding officer calls for discussion on the amendment.
5. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the amendment, and announces result.

If the amendment passes, the motion on the floor is now the amended motion. If the amendment fails, the original motion remains on the floor.

A "friendly amendment" is often used to describe an amendment offered by a member who agreed with the main motion, but believes that the amendment will improve the statement or effect of the main motion, or will increase the chances of the main motion's adoption.

1. Member raises hand and is recognized from the presiding officer.
2. Member states they would like to "offer a friendly amendment to the motion; I move to amend the motion, that we paint city hall red with funding from grants."
3. Amendment is seconded.
4. Presiding officer states the friendly amendment.

5. Presiding officer call for discussion on the friendly amendment.
6. Presiding officer calls for a vote on the amendment and announces result.

Motion to Postpone

A member may move to delay action (voting) on a motion to a certain time, usually the next meeting. A postponed motion is considered unfinished business and automatically comes up for further consideration at the next meeting (or designated date).

1. A member makes a motion to postpone the motion to another date (usually the next meeting).
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Presiding officer states motion.
4. Presiding officer calls for discussion.
5. Motion is amendable and debatable.
6. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states result of the vote and action taken.

Motion to Suspend the Rules

Used if the Commission/Committee wishes to do something during a meeting that it cannot do without violating one or more of its regular rules. Commonly used to address agenda items out of order after the agenda has been approved or allowing an unscheduled visitor to address the assembly.

1. Can be made any time that no question is pending.
2. A member makes a motion; "I move to suspend the rules to hear New Business, Item C. before New Business, Item A."
3. Is out of order when another has the floor.
4. Motion must be seconded.
5. Motion is not debatable or amendable.
6. Motion must have two-thirds majority approval.
7. Presiding officer calls for a vote, and states the result of the vote and the action taken.

Motion for Point of Order

Used when a member thinks the rules are being violated or more commonly when discussion does not pertain to the topic of the motion on the floor.

1. Does not have to be recognized by the presiding officer.
2. Does not need to be seconded.
3. Is not debatable. The presiding officer may allow explanation.
4. Is not amendable.
5. Is ruled on by the presiding officer. The presiding officer may seek the advice of the Clerk or more senior members present.
6. Cannot be reconsidered.

Motion for Reconsideration

Used to bring a motion back before the Commission/Committee for further consideration.

1. Can be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side (aye if the motion was adopted/no if the motion was lost.)
2. Motion must be seconded.
3. Motion cannot be amended.
4. Only the merits of the reconsideration are debatable.
5. Requires a two-thirds vote to adopt a motion to reconsider.
6. Presiding officer states the result of the vote and the action taken.

Call for the Question

Used to immediately close discussion and the making of subsidiary motions except the motion to "Lay on the Table." Commonly used to bring an immediate vote on one or more pending questions.

1. Takes precedence over all debatable or amendable motions to which it is applied.
2. Yields only to the subsidiary motion to lay on the Table, privileged motions and all applicable incidental motions.
3. Must be seconded.
4. Is out of order when another has the floor.
5. Is not debatable or amendable.
6. Requires a two-thirds vote to adopt a call for the question.
7. Cannot be reconsidered.

Lay on the Table

Used to enable the Commission/Committee to lay the pending question aside temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen. Commonly misused to stop discussion on a motion, with the intent to "kill" or avoid dealing with a measure.

1. Takes precedence over all subsidiary motions and pending incidental motions when made.
2. Cannot be applied to main motions.
3. Is out of order when another has the floor.
4. Must be seconded.
5. Is not debatable or amendable. The presiding officer can ask the maker his/her reasons.
6. Requires a majority vote.
7. Cannot be reconsidered.

Meeting Minutes

1. Minutes are a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said.
2. Meeting minutes are not verbatim transcripts.
3. Amendments that will change the substance of the minutes should be addressed on the record.
4. Approval of the minutes is not a time to correct typographical errors. If necessary, those may be provided directly to the recording clerk prior to or at the meeting.

Types of Meetings

A Regular Meeting refers to the regularly scheduled meetings as established by the bylaws for the particular commission/committee/board. These are scheduled for the upcoming calendar year by resolution every December. During a regular meeting the procedures as outlined under the General Order of Meetings is followed.

Special Meetings are held when a single business item or two are to be addressed; the day or meeting time is changed from the regular schedule established in the bylaws; or the commission/committee feels that additional meetings are required to address items on the agenda responsibly. Special meetings follow the same procedures as outlined under the General Order of Meetings with the exception that minutes are not approved.

Executive Session is a portion of a meeting at which the proceedings are withheld from the public. This type of meeting is normally used to handle matters relating to discipline or finances. The members adjourn to another location within City Hall (usually the conference room adjacent to the Mayor's office.) After dealing with the business at hand the members will return to the main meeting place and resume the public portion of the regular or special meeting.

Types of Motions

Original or Incidental main motions are used to introduce business.

Original Main motion is a main motion that introduces a substantive question as a new subject. This is the most commonly used motion. (e.g. I move that the Club contribute \$50 to the centennial celebration")

Incidental Main motion is a main motion (Point of Order, Suspend the Rules) that relates to the business of the Commission/Committee, or its past or future action. (e.g. I move to take a recess.)

1. Takes precedence of nothing. Cannot be made when a question is pending.
2. Can be applied to no other motion.
3. Is out of order when another has the floor.
4. Must be seconded.
5. Is debatable and amendable.
6. Requires a majority vote.
7. Can be reconsidered.

Subsidiary motions (Amend, Postpone) can be applied to the main motion to modify, delay action or dispose of the main motion. These motions are commonly made while the main motion is open for debate. Once made these motions must be voted on before the main motion.

Privileged motions (Recess, Adjourn) do not relate to pending business but deal with special matters of immediate and overriding importance. These motions are allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else.

Role of the Officers

Chairperson

The member chosen for this position is selected principally for the ability to preside. They should be familiar with the bylaws of the commission/committee. As Chairperson the member selected has to use diplomacy, tact and common sense during a meeting. The duties of the chairperson are as follows:

1. To open the meeting at the appointed time.
2. Ascertain a quorum is present.
3. Announce in proper sequence the business before the commission/committee.
4. Recognize members who are entitled to the floor.
5. To state and put to vote all questions that legitimately come before the commission/committee and announces the results.
6. To protect the commission/committee from frivolous motions by refusing to recognize them.
7. To expedite business in every way compatible with the rights of members.
8. To enforce the rules relating to debate and to order and decorum within the commission/committee.
9. To respond to inquiries relating to parliamentary procedures.
10. To decide all questions of order subject to appeal.
11. To declare the meeting adjourned.

The Chairperson should have a copy of the bylaws in case they are needed for reference.

Vice Chairperson

The Vice Chairperson is chosen to preside over a meeting when the Chairperson is not present, or it is necessary for them to vacate the chair. The duties of the Vice Chairperson are the same as shown above for the Chairperson when assuming that role.

In most commissions/committees if the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are not present or have disqualified themselves in some manner and there is still a quorum the most senior member of the commission/committee/board fills in as Acting Chairperson.

It is recommended to familiarize yourself with parliamentary procedures and terminology. When each member has understanding of these procedures the result is productive meetings.